



CAR PROWL PREVENTION

Business Strategies for Parking Lots & Garages

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Car prowling or theft from vehicles consistently ranks as one of the top nationwide crimes. For parking lots and garages, there is a higher concentration of parked vehicles that are left unattended for hours at a time, which create opportunities for theft.

Garages and lots that are not monitored by security staff and have poor lighting, concealed areas, limited pedestrian traffic, and few access controls will be more vulnerable to theft. Additionally, where customers consistently leave items of value or perceived value in their cars, the garage or lot will be a desirable target for criminals.

Unfortunately, burglary of a vehicle can be completed in a minute or less. Methods of entry include entering into the vehicle through an unlocked door and breaking a window. The offender often will enter the parking area by foot and transport stolen items by backpack or bag. Items frequently stolen include cellular devices, laptops, electronic devices, documents with personal information, purses, wallets, luggage, gym bags, loose change and concealed weapons.



Although some of the crime occurring in a parking garage or lot may be facilitated by the design of the property, there are a few steps that you can take to reduce theft.

Criminals do not want to be caught. Where there are areas on your property that are difficult to observe, an offender can commit a crime with relative anonymity. Improving the visibility of your lot or garage will make your garage safer because security, employees, customers, or people walking or driving can witness what is happening and call the authorities. Some strategies that you can employ to improve the surveillance of your property:

- Install or upgrade lighting so that your property is well-lit and there are no dark areas that can conceal illicit activities. Lighting should be evenly distributed, vandal-resistant, and adequate for users to observe activities. Color rendition is an important consideration because it allows people to see colors and describe activity more accurately. Painting a light color on the walls and ceiling will provide additional illumination.
- Trim vegetation that obstructs views of the cars parked in your lot and pay machines.
- If there are nooks or blind spots on your property, add convex mirrors to improve or block access to those areas (i.e. gate off the area under a stairwell).
- Install vandal-resistant security cameras, especially in places that are not monitored by security personnel or staff. When purchasing a system, consider that it is just as much an apprehension tool as it is a deterrent. Picture quality and placement are all important factors.
- If possible, open up visibility in parking attendants' booths or security stations so that staff can monitor as much area of the parking area as possible.

- Encourage security staff to greet people as they enter the space. (If an offender knows that you may be able to identify him or her, that increases the risk of apprehension.)
- Assign security to perform random foot patrols.
- If you replace doors or other fixtures, consider buying products that improve visibility.

Access control is an important deterrent. Interventions that include the installation of locks and gates aim to decrease criminal access to property, especially into areas where a person with criminal intent would not easily be seen by others. A garage or lot can become more vulnerable to crime when there are more ways that offenders can enter and exit the property without notice. Prevention strategies include:

- Direct people to enter the garage through the front entry where they will be seen by security.
- Install a fence around a parking lot or a mesh gate on the gaps above the wall to a garage to limit access.
- Post signage reminding customers and employees to remove valuable items from their vehicles.
- Post signage encouraging customers and employees to report suspicious activity.

